

ZOLA, NOVELIST AND REFORMER
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and *his* first lieutenant, the Count de Mun, exerted at every opportunity.

Zola's earliest Academical patrons were his friends, François Coppe'e and Ludovic Hale'vy. Dumas *fils* likewise

supported him, as mentioned in a previous chapter. So

did Jules Claretie, to the very end. Over a term of years he presented himself nearly a score of times, and on each occasion the votes cast for him dwindled, until at last only Claretie's was left. His other friends shrewdly re-

garded the struggle as hopeless. Some people have thought that if Zola had lived a few years longer he might have proved successful, but the writer does not share that view.

For the last thirty years — to go back no farther — the Academy has been essentially conservative in its political

and social views. To preserve a kind of reputation for

fairness it has elected, now and again, a man of more or less advanced opinions; but the majority has always re-

mained much the same, the " liberal" members never being

more than ten or twelve in number. On consulting the

list for 1903 one can only find nine who by some possi-

bility might have combined together to vote for a man

like Zola. On the other hand, it is not unlikely that time

will bring certain revenges. Comparatively few

years ago
the Academy, which had repeatedly closed its
doors to the
author of "La Comedie Humaine," selected
the "Eulogy
of Honore" de Balzac" as the subject of its
"Prize for
Eloquence " ; and at some future date the "
Eulogy of \$mile
Zola " may be similarly chosen,

Zola was in nowise cast down when, at his
first at-
tempt to gain admittance (1890), M. Charles
de Freycinet,
a clever man, who did some good work during
the war of